Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ASMARA 00338 241731Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05
MMO-01 OC-06 CCO-00 OCL-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 PER-01
/082 W
----------241734Z 101943 /43
O 241630Z APR 77
FM AMCONSUL ASMARA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 4478
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA NIACT IMMEDIATE
JCS IMMEDIATE
OSD WASHDC IMMEDIATE
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON IMMEDIATE
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0338

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: AEMR, PINS, PINT ET
SUBJECT: CLOSURE OF KAGNEW AND CONGEN: ATMOSPHERICS, INTELLIGENCE
AND AMCITS

1. IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT THE ATMOSPHERE IN ASMARA HAS BECOME DISTINCTLY SOUR DURING THE COURSE OF APRIL 24. IT IS REPORTED THAT THE EPMG COMMITTEE ON KAGNEW CLOSURE HAS BEEN MEETING THROUGHOUT THE AFTERNOON AND MOVED REPIDLY TO OCCUPY TRACT BRAVO. WHILE THE EXACT COMPOSITION OF THIS COMMITTEE IS NOT KNOWN AT THIS TIME, IT APPEARS THAT IT IS COMPRISED OF A NUMBER OF OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS DISTINCTLY HOSTILE TO THE USG. WE DO HAVE THREE NAMES; ABRAHAM MEBRATU, DIRECTOR OF LOCAL MOFA; FEIGNED "FRIEND" OF THE AMERICANS WHO IS RENOWNEDFOR NEGLIGIBLE INTEGRITY; ATO MENGESHA, POLAD TO THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR, KNOWN TO BE CLOSE TO THE DIRG AND CAPT KIDANE, AN EPMG OFFICER CAUGHT BETWEEN HIS FRIENDSHIP TOWARD THE USG AND HIS OBLIGATION TO FOLLOW ORDERS.
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PAGE 02 ASMARA 00338 241731Z

THE HARDLINERS IN THIS GROUP CLEARLY DOMINATE AS THEY HAVE NOW RESTRICTED ALL KAGNEW PERSONNEL TO THE BARATTOLO RESIDENCES AND TRACT ECHO AND MAY HAVE MORE SINISTER SURPRISES IN STORE. OTHER INDICATORS OF A DETERIORATING ATMOSPHERE IS AN UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT ADDIS RADIO ANNOUNCED THAT AMERICANS IN ASMARA ARE NOT TO DRIVE INTO THE CENTRAL PART OF THE CITY (N.B. THIS RESTRICTION WOULD NOT HAMPER EITHER KAGNEW PERSONNEL OR CONGEN STAFF FROM DRIVING

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TO THE AIRPORT). FURTHER, AN MSG WHO WAS RETRIEVING SOME PERSONAL EFFECTS FROM THE MARINE HOUSE WITHIN A BLOCK OF THE CONGEN WAS JEERED BY SOME LOCAL TOUGHS WITH CHANTS OF "GO, GO*"

2. THE SUDANESE ACTING CG VISITED THE CONGEN TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION ON THE EPMG MOVES AGAINST FOREIGNERS. HE IS VERY PERTURBED ABOUT HIS EXPULSION AND EXPECTS THAT THE GOS WILL CLOSE THE EPMG CONSULATE IN KASSALA IMMEDIATELY. HE IS FURTHER CONVINCED THAT INSURGENT TROOPS ARE MASSING IN THE VICINITY OF ASMARA. HE DRAWS THIS FROM QUESTIONABLE ELF BOASTS IN KHARTOUM THAT ASMARA IS THE NEXT TARGET, AND UNEVALUATED EYE-WITNESS REPORTS FROM VILLAGERS IN THE ENVIRONS OF ASMARA THAT SIZEABLE CONCENTRATION OF INSURGENT TROOPS HAVE BEEN SEEN IN RECENT DAYS. HE CONCLUDES THAT THE INSURGENTS ARE PREPARING FOR AN ATTACK AGAINST ASMARA AS SOON AS WHAT THE INSURGENTS PERCEIVE THAT ANOTHER "RED MARCH" ON ERITREA IS PLANNED AGAINST ERITREA. HE CLAIMS THE ATTACK ON THE ASSAB REFINERY WAS TO PRE-EMPT SUCH A MARCH. IT IS WIDELY RUMORED IN ASMARA THAT SUCH A MARCH IS BEING PLANNED, AND THAT THE EXPULSION OF KAGNEW AND THE FOREIGN CONSULATES MERELY PRESAGE THIS MOVE. ACCORDING TO THIS SCENARIO, ONCE FOREIGN OFFICIALS ARE REMOVED, FOREIGN CITIZENS WILL BE EXPELLED AND THEN THE RED MARCH WILL BEGIN. AT THAT POINT THE INSURGENTS WOULD BE FULLY PREPARED TO STRIKE ASMARA, CUTTING THE VITAL ROAD LINK TO MASSAWA AND THE VULNERABLE UTILITIES.

3. IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, I SUGGEST THE DEPT RECONSIDER WHAT THE CONGEN'S POSITION SHOULD BE CONCERNING THE AMCITS IN ASMARA. ALL AMCITS HAVE BEEN INFORMED DURING THE DAY THAT THE CONGEN IS BEING CLOSED, BUT WERE NOT GIVEN SPECIFIC ADVICE CONCERNING THEIR CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ASMARA 00338 241731Z

OWN DEPARTURE. WHILE THE REPORTS THAT THE RED MARCH ARE LITTLE MORE THAN SPECULATION AT THIS TIME, THERE ARE PRECEDENTS FOR THE EPMG REMOVING FOREIGN OBSERVERS BEFORE ATTEMPTING SUCH A MOVE. ANY INFORMATION THE EMBASSY MIGHT CONTRIBUTE ON THE SUBJECT WOULD BE APPRECIATED. BY LATEST HEADCOUNT, THE NUMBER OF PRIVATE AMCITS INVOLVED TOTAL 13 PLUS AN ITALIAN NATIONAL MOTHER OF THREE AMCIT CHILDREN.
WAUCHOPE

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EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
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